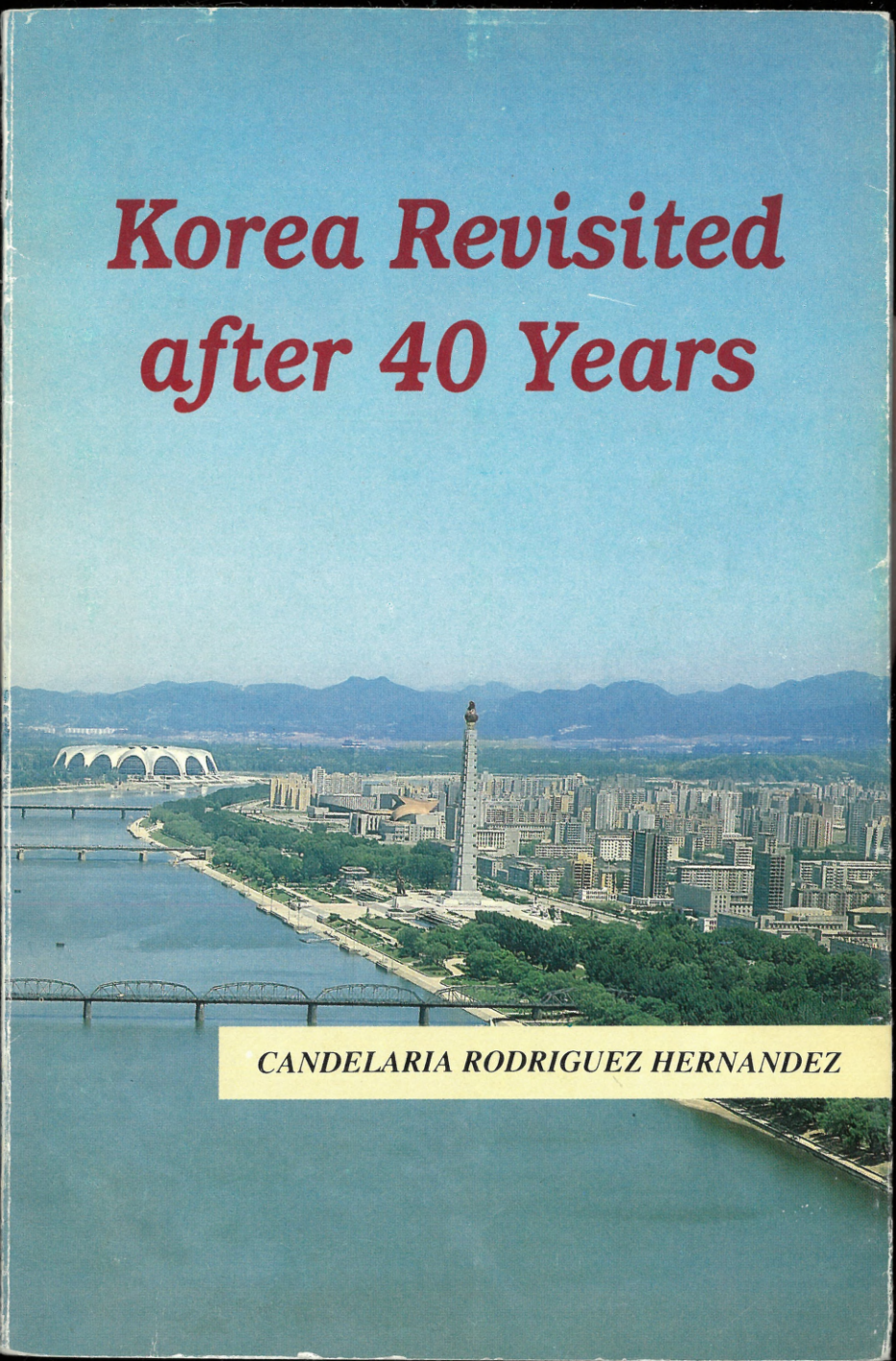
Korea Revisited after 40 Years



CANDELARIA RODRIGUEZ HERNANDEZ

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

The author was born into the family of a big bourgeois merchant in Havana, Cuba on October 23, 1928. She received her elementary and secondary education in Catholic schools. In 1949 she graduated from Havana University with a Doctorate of Law and was awarded the national prize "Ricardo Dolz y Arango". In 1951 she joined the International Commission of the Women's International Democratic Federation which visited Korea to investigate the crimes and atrocities committed by US soldiers against the civilian population, women and children included, under cover of the UN flag. On her way back to Cuba, Candelaria was arrested in New York where she was made to board a plane and, on arrival in Havana, was escorted to the Military Intelligence Service and the Bureau of Investigation of Communist Activities from the stairway to the plane. She published a pamphlet entitled *What I Saw in Korea* and covered the whole island denouncing the crimes she had witnessed. She was repeatedly thrown into prison for these activities. The Cuban people responded with anti-imperialist and internationalist solidarity to the denunciation and the Cuban government was compelled to refrain from sending troops to fight the fraternal Korean people.

Korea Revisited after 40 Years

CANDELARIA RODRIGUEZ HERNANDEZ

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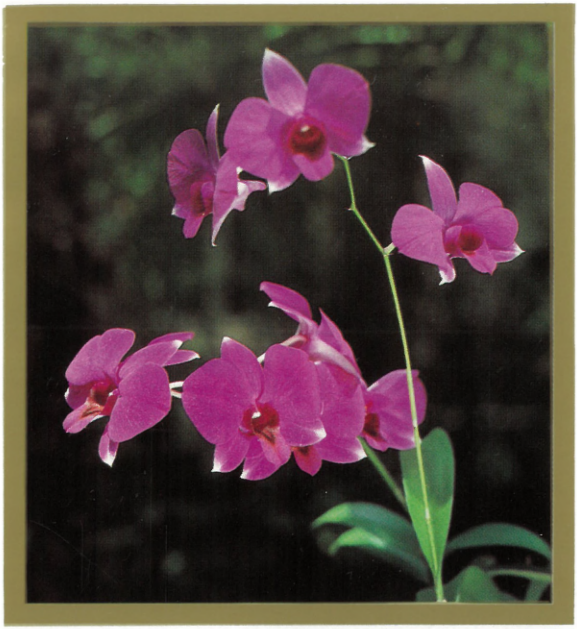
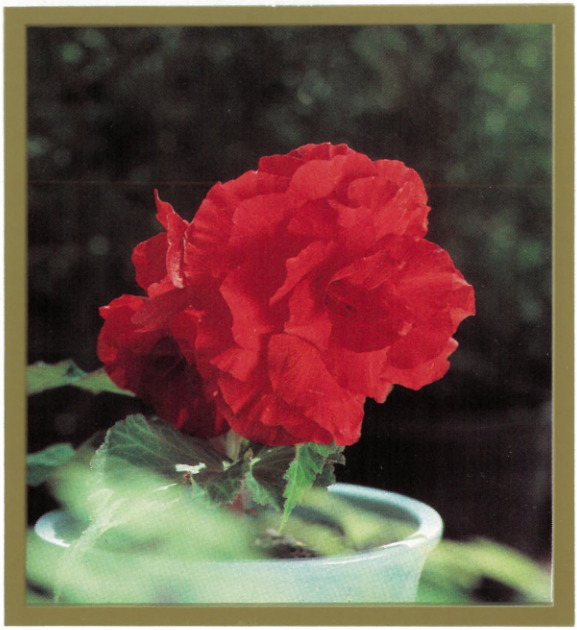
1994

President Kim Il Sung and the author pose for
a souvenir photograph

Comrade Kim Jong Il, Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, on the platform of the parade held in honour of the 60th birthday of the KPA



Kimilsungia



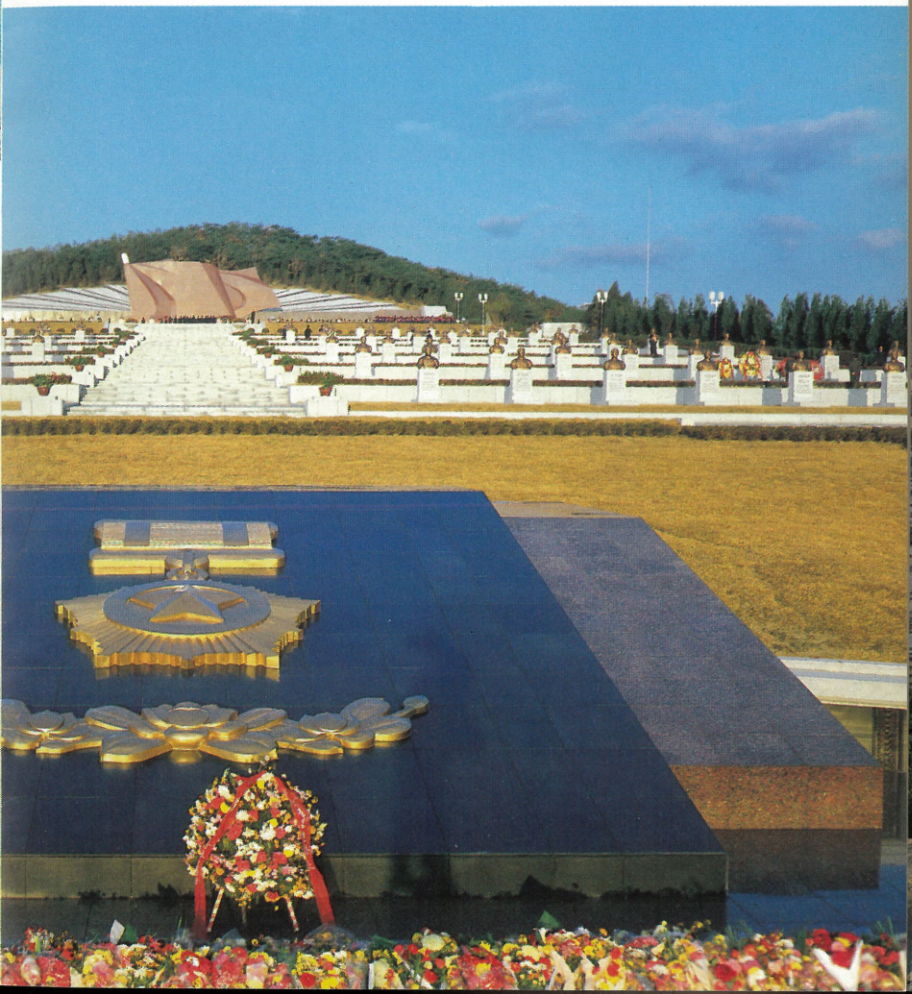
Kimjongilia

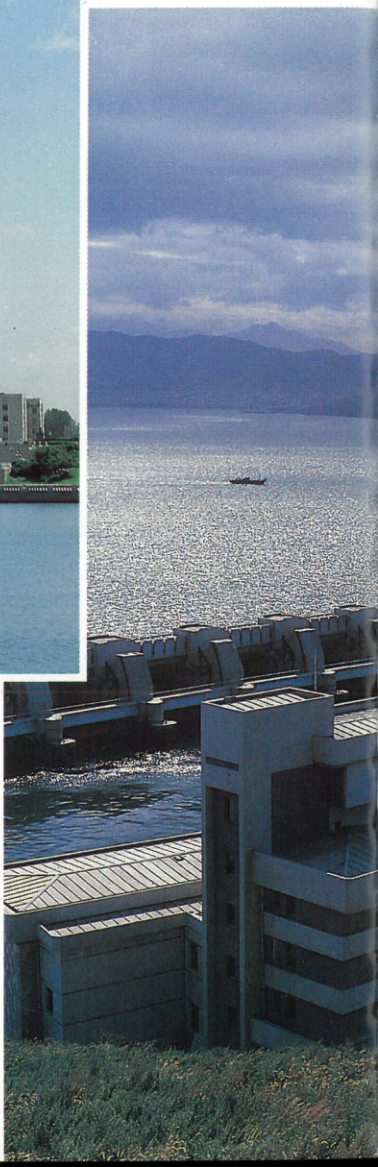
The statue of President Kim Il Sung

The Korean people erected his statue on the Mansu Hill of Pyongyang reflecting a unanimous desire to immortalize his undying revolutionary accomplishments. Koreans and foreigners visit in an endless stream to pay homage to him.

The bust of Comrade Kim Jong Suk, heroine of the anti-Japanese struggle, in the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery

The Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery on the Jujak Peak of Mt. Taesong which commands a bird's-eye view of Pyongyang





The Tower of the Juche Idea
The tower was built in the heart of Pyongyang and reflects the unanimous desire of the Korean people to enshrine the ideological and theoretical achievements made by President Kim Il Sung, the author of the immortal Juche idea, and his noble revolutionary exploits and persistent struggle for the ultimate victory of the revolutionary cause of Juche.

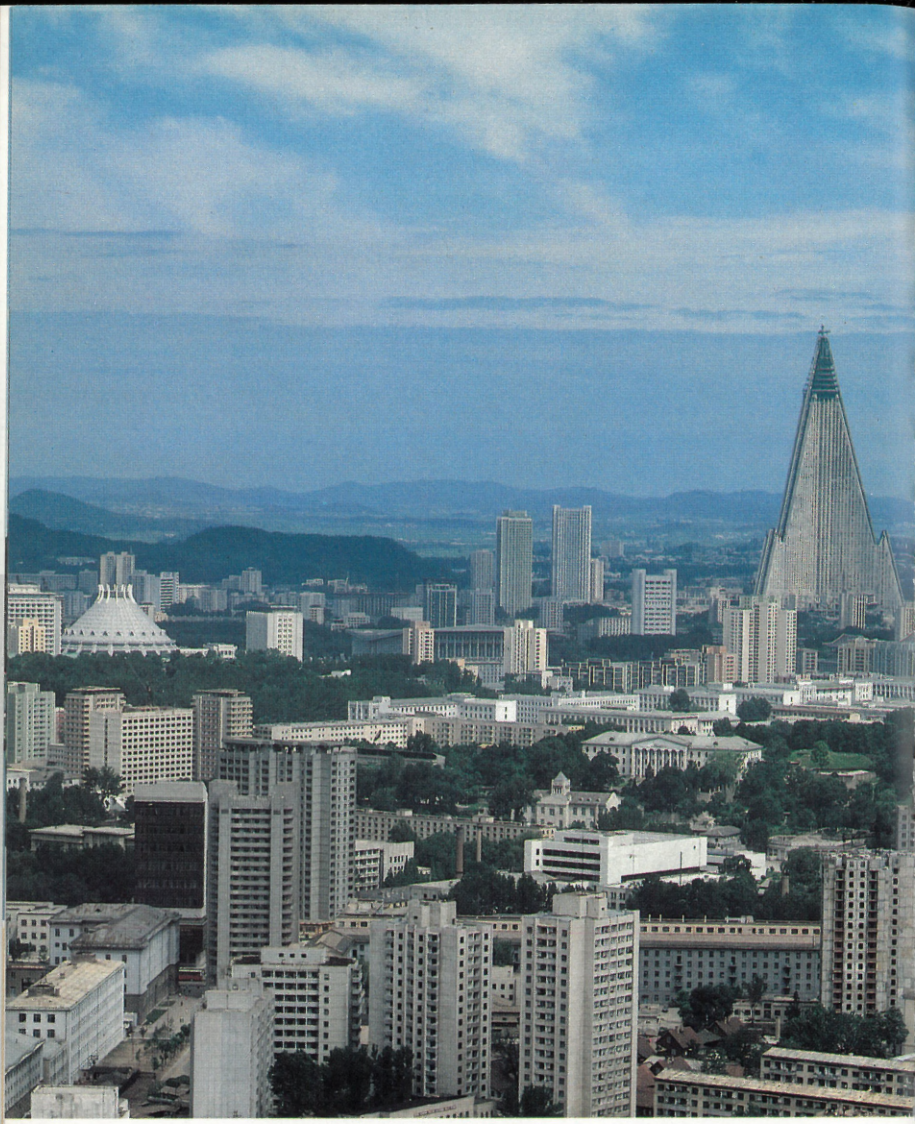
The 8-kilometre long West Sea Barrage built on the rough sea

The Chollima Statue representing the Korean people's heroic mettle and unyielding fighting spirit

The 10,000-ton press

Happy children of Korea

The beautiful bride marries a disabled soldier who lost his sight fighting for the good of the country. This has become a beautiful custom in Korea.



The US imperialists indiscriminately bombed Pyongyang alone more than 1,400 times, raining down over 428,000 bombs during the three-year long Korean war. The White House war maniacs ranted that Pyongyang would not rise again in 100 years. It is only forty odd years since then. But how wonderful Pyongyang looks today!

Ri In Mo, the incarnation of Faith and Will
He was wounded and taken prisoner by the enemy while working as a war correspondent for the Korean People's Army during the Korean war. 34 years' imprisonment and torture in south Korea could not break his faith. Now he enjoys a happy life in the embrace of the Republic, and is surrounded by the respect and affection of the people.

The concrete walls–a symbol of Korea's division

To the Reader

I am neither a writer nor a journalist. I have no experience in literary activity. I, a jurist, took up the pen in order to describe what I saw and experienced in Korea.

I devoted my whole life to the bar, to legal work.

In this book I have conscientiously striven to avoid using florid language and empty rhetoric.

Proceeding from a keen sense of obligation, I simply described what I saw and what impressed me.

I am now retired on a pension, and am chairwoman of the Lawyer's Association of Havana City, a body affiliated to the National Union of Jurists of Cuba.

Doctor Candelaria Rodriguez Hernandez

December 1993

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1. Birthday Greetings in the Sky

I was unexpectedly invited to visit the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It was a great surprise for me. Could it really be me, practically retired from working life, who was invited to visit? A visit to Korea at that.

It was the great leader President Kim Il Sung who sent me the invitation; he had not forgotten my little contribution during the Korean war.

I wondered whether it was a dream or reality. If it were a dream, I did not want to wake up.

I ran up to Maria Elena and asked her to pinch my arm to see if I was only dreaming. I wasn't.

It is difficult to describe the emotion, the joy and doubt which seized me in the days of preparation for the travel.

I thought of Korea I had known 40 years ago washed in a sea of blood. Before my mind's eye there appeared scenes of savage war, heaps of ashes, burned houses, craters produced by relentless bombing, earth so calcined that a scoop of soil was full of shell fragments ....

How could Korea rise up in so short a spell as 40 years, when confronted by the chieftain of imperialism?

The Soviet Union, which was considered a bulwark of socialism, disappeared in a day like smoke, while the other socialist countries of Europe are now swallowing the bitter pill of capitalism. All these reflections made me think of Korea, the heroic Korea which has risen proudly before the world, history and mankind.

Lost in this thought, I traversed the ocean and flew into Moscow. On arrival, the Korean ambassador in Russia kindly invited me to a dinner in honour of my birthday. I wasn't expecting such cordial hospitality. During the flight to Pyongyang, the Korean stewardess congratulated me on my birthday.

On arrival in Korea I made a rapid tour of Pyongyang in a car. I was anxious not to let any details slip by: the Arch of Triumph, the Korean Central History Museum, May Day Stadium and the flaming beacon of the Tower of the Juche Idea. I intended to have a rest after returning to my lodgings, but the chairman of the Korean Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries was waiting for me to congratulate me on my birthday.

Holding me by the arm amiably, he conducted me to a well-appointed table with toasts.

It was a fine experience.

I was offered hospitality for my birthday three times!

Once again I felt the love and warmth of the Korean people. Their cordiality and kindness are traditional. I felt the friendly atmosphere inculcated by President Kim Il Sung, justly considered by his people as heaven and implanted in the heart of every Korean.

2. Where Has the Wooden Bridge Gone?

We flock from villages, cities and factories
Sickle, saw and hammer are our weapons of struggle
We sing the life, joining voices,

Marching, we will occupy the earth.

I recalled, and mused over, this verse of Region Pedroso while on the plane.

Sickle, saw and hammer are weapons of struggle in the hands of working people. They make, build and rebuild with them. Nevertheless, in our times it is impossible to make great progress without science and techniques applied to production. It was impossible to rebuild Korea from a heap of ashes with only these primitive means, no matter what heroism was displayed.

I knew that socialist Korea had much developed, through mass media and illustrated magazines about Korea, as well as books and information I got from my friends who had visited Korea.

I recalled my visit of 1963. Korea began to rise from among the ruins of war. The Chollima Movement, represented by a winged horse which covers a thousand *ri* at a gallop, meant constant advance, but Korea was still underdeveloped.

I recalled all of this and thought it over.

On arrival at Sunan Airport I began to perceive the new Korea. Wide avenues lined with multi-story modern houses and lush shady trees on both sides extended from the new terminal building.

Our car raced along the broad road of the capital, Pyongyang. I anxiously sought the Chollima Statue which represented the spirit of Korea and a miniature of which I have kept in my house since 1963, but I did not see it. Everything had changed. A majestic "gate" received me, as if outstretched arms, and my female interpreter informed me that it was the Arch of Triumph. "The Arch of Triumph," I echoed. A female functionary,

who was accompanying me, kindly explained to me "It is one of the monuments to let posterity know of the immortal exploits of President Kim Il Sung who at an early age undertook the arduous struggle to liberate the country from Japanese colonial rule which lasted till 1945."

I looked at the fine columns faced with marble and engraved with golden numerals, 1925-1945.

I commented that the revolutionary spirit of the struggle against Japanese imperialism is well represented in the Arch of Triumph. The functionary chimed in and added, "The Korean people live and fight with the revolutionary conviction of Mt. Paektu, build and develop at the speed of Chollima." The remark was of profound meaning.

After resting awhile at my lodgings, we sat down to discuss the program which had been prepared for me.

I visited many places and then went to Sinuiju, the longed-for frontier city of Korea. I very much wanted to go to Sinuiju, an unforgettable place, stroll across the wooden bridge and see the ravaged building where I stayed on May 17, 1951, when I set foot on the Korean land for the first time. I wanted to repeat the itinerary from Sinuiju to Pyongyang.

I wanted to travel by train and be among the Korean people, so I requested to travel on an ordinary train. During the trip I was accompanied by Comrade Chon, the vice-chairwoman of the Korean Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. We talked about the friendship between Cuba and Korea, the solidarity between our peoples against the common enemy, and the firm determination to build socialism and communism in our countries.

I acquainted myself with a Korean comrade who sat with us like an old friend, listened to our conversation

and said to me that Cuba and Korea are distant from each other geographically but they are united in heart as revolutionary comrades-in-arms on one and the same front in the anti-imperialist struggle against the common enemy, the United States.

My heart was filled with warmth and joy. Even the chill of autumn could not unsettle me in the midst of so much warmth and comradeship. The train ran pleasantly and stirred my emotions.

I looked out of the window. Everything that attracted my gaze was marvelous: the expansive fields sown in an orderly manner, cosy and modern houses, tractors, lorries and factories. Nowhere could be seen the traces of destruction 40 years ago. But, as we approached Sinuiju, I said to myself the bridge must be there and I will recognize it; so too the "hotel" where I stayed overnight.

Comrade Chon and my interpreter smiled amiably and shook their heads saying, "You will never find them".

But I kept on saying to myself, "I will find them, the bridge and the 'hotel' ".

For me they were unforgettable. The events of 40 years ago were revived in my memory.

As a member of the commission sent by the Women's International Democratic Federation to investigate the crimes and atrocities committed by US imperialism against the civilian population of Korea, I crossed the Amnok River on a camouflaged boat at midnight and set foot on Korean land, the destination of our journey. There was an old and dangerous wooden bridge from which one could fall if one was not careful. We were welcomed by the Korean women with bouquets of fragrant flowers. The excitement of meeting moved all of us to tears. Tears of excitement and fraternal hugs united us in friendship.

The streets were lit up by the full moon which shone like a beacon. It was one midnight in May 1951.

At the frugal supper offered to cheer us up, a Korean woman who was sitting beside me began to sing quietly something like a lullaby. She held my hand firmly and pressed it against her breast. Language was no obstacle to understanding.

Then we stayed overnight in a place which served us as dormitory. It was not a hotel but part of a building destroyed in the repeated bombings.

Sinuiju was bombed on November 8, 1950. More than 100 American planes raided the city and destroyed 2,100 public buildings, 6,800 houses, 16 out of 17 primary schools and 12 out of 19 secondary schools. More than 5,000 people were killed. Two hospitals with Red Cross signs visible on their roofs were burned by napalm bombs; 26 patients and over 2,500 civilians at the nearby market were killed in the flames.

These acts of US imperialism were nothing other than genocide.

Our group headed for Pyongyang in a jeep. The enemy's plane strafed our car on the road. I was terror-stricken. The warning "Hanggong" (air raid) sounded like "death". My companions and I ran to the bomb shelter. In an instant bullets started raining all around us. I was terrified and thought of my motherland and my family and wondered whether I would ever return home. My companions wept at the thought of their children and family but never would they cower. I still remember the word "Hanggong". It still sounds to me like death.

The train reduced speed, blowing its whistle. It pulled up to the station platform.

I doubted my eyes, setting foot on the soil of Sinuiju.

Is this really Sinuiju? What came into view was an entirely new city with pavement, tall buildings, monuments and restaurants, a modern city with no traces of the past.

I requested an immediate visit to the place where I stayed that night of May, since destroyed. After a while the vice-chairman of the City Administration and Economic Committee conducted me to a building and told me this was the place.

I couldn't believe it. I said no and explained in detail the place from memory. He said with a smile that all that remained of the building were four round windows, which had been preserved and part of the walls, which had been rebuilt, and that the building was now used as a library for children.

Nevertheless, I thought he had duped me concerning the building and asked to go and see the wooden bridge. I thought it would have been in its original state.

Some minutes later the car carrying me pulled up in front of a ferroconcrete bridge as broad as an avenue. No words were exchanged, but I became aware that this was the site where "my bridge" had been. I could recognize the place.

Where then has the wooden bridge gone?

We laughed a hearty laugh when my companion Chon told me an anecdote widely known in Korea about a certain grandfather Choe, who visited Pyongyang in the period of reconstruction and went calling at his son's house together with his wife after an interval of ten years. He could neither recognize the street nor the house although he boasted that he knew where it was. Smiling, they compared me with the Korean grandfather.

I toured the Taean Heavy Machine Complex furnished with large-sized equipment, the monumental

West Sea Barrage built on the sea, 20,30 and 40-storey buildings but could not find any traces of the 50s and 60s.

The new physiognomy of Korea at the summit of imagination! I told with excitement my Korean comrades and the entire Korean people that "Korea has not so much been reconstructed, but newly built. Indeed, the new Korea is a song about the consistent creative labour of the Korean people under the leadership of President Kim Il Sung and the leader Kim Jong Il."

3. Shock

I reached a modest straw-thatched Korean farmhouse which had three rooms, a detached cowshed, and a storeroom.

In the dark period of Japanese colonial rule most of the Korean people are said to have lived in such humble houses.

This carefully repaired and preserved house is where the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung was born and spent his childhood.

In Korea this house is much revered and is called "the native home of Mangyongdae".

When I entered a small room I found there modest and simple household furnishings and kitchen utensils.

It was in autumn that I visited Mangyongdae. There were many visitors, but particularly conspicuous were the schoolchildren wearing red neckties, their eyes glistening. They were standing in orderly lines.

After having explained about the house, the guide said, indicating the brushwood gate:

"This small waist-high brushwood gate is always open. It was through this very gate that our great leader left his home for the mountains in order to liberate the country from the Japanese yoke. Our poets and musicians sing of this brushwood gate."

At the age of 13 the great leader embarked on the road of revolution and was firmly determined not to return until the Japanese imperialists were driven out and Korea achieved independence.

He crossed the Amnok River along with the Korean people in search of his parents who were also revolutionaries.

He did not return until he had spent 20 years struggling against the Japanese. The liberation of Korea became a reality. Only then did he return home and once again pass through the brushwood gate. He returned alone. His parents laid down their lives for the revolution; his brother too, and almost all his family. He suffered much pain even though he returned victorious.

His grandmother ran out barefoot and hugged her grandson, saying:

"Why have you come alone? Your parents should have come with you."

The villagers watched this moving scene of reunion.

The guide told this story with excitement. It was really touching.

I began thinking about the lessons of Cuban history from the almost 100 year long struggle to attain complete independence and national sovereignty. Marti sang his motherland in his modest immortal poem, "Place a bouquet of flowers and a flag on my tomb when I die without

the motherland and without a master." Maseo, our bronze Titan, and his brave men, almost barehanded and with only machetes for weapons, inflicted serious losses upon the well-armed and well-clothed enemy troops. Maximo Gomez was the great Dominican-Cuban generalissimo of the insurgents against Spanish colonial rule.

Many years passed and on Sierra Maestra our guerrillas, led by Fidel, defeated the soldiers of the tyrant, but we still have to fight to raise the criminal blockade of US imperialism.

Mangyongdae and Mt. Paektu in Korea! Moncada and Sierra Maestra in Cuba!

The glorious histories of the Cuban and Korean peoples merge into one and the beacon fire of revolution, which has banded us together more closely, serves as an example for the world's people.

Sunk in this thought, I went to the Mangyongdae Revolutionary School where the bereaved children of martyrs were educated.

No one is forgotten. The noble aim represented by the great leader's birthplace at Mangyongdae should be ceaselessly pursued. Mt. Paektu and its heroism and patriotism should be advanced as a noble heritage.

After liberation of the country, the great leader sent functionaries to different parts of the country and to China in order to seek out revolutionaries and their bereaved families and so bring them to his side. A modest building was erected and then converted into a beautiful and well-appointed palace which was provided with modern facilities needed for acquiring all the branches of knowledge–from models of fighter planes to computer rooms. All these were placed at the disposal of the students.

Through the students who studied there I came to learn of great love lavished on the children of revolutionary martyrs who fought for the liberation and independence of the country.

The history of this school's development as the guide explained, which has been converted into a centre for study and a happy cradle for the children of revolutionary martyrs, is impregnated with the noble spirit of the indomitable revolutionary fighter Comrade Kim Jong Suk.

Her love for the children of comrades sacrificed in the anti-Japanese struggle was boundless.

The guide went on to explain that in the beginning of August 1947, Kim Jong Suk, who was given the task of searching for and bringing back the children of comrades-in-arms lost in battle and looked after the repatriated children with so much care, came together with General Kim Il Sung to Kan-ri, Jaegyong Sub-County, Taedong County where the temporary building of Mangyongdae Revolutionary School was located. She looked after them with the affection and love of a mother.

Many of them who came from northeast China were poorly dressed, in worn-out shoes and with unkempt hair, but their eyes sparkled with joy at being beside the General.

When he met them one by one, a wave of emotion was stirred. The General soothingly hugged them, tearfully saying, "It will be all right. Don't weep. You will be well dressed and given an education... . We will look after you."

Kim Jong Suk comforted them, saying that now the General would be a father to them.

The functionaries watching the scene also succumbed to tears.

Much excited at the scene of General Kim Il Sung embracing the children, Kim Jong Suk said to functionaries, "The General was so pained over the children that he did not take lunch."

In order to alleviate the concern of the General, she took it upon herself to prepare their uniforms and saw to it that things went well. She drew up designs and frequently visited clothing factories. Thus all of them were supplied with new uniforms before the opening of school. Some uniforms were a little larger, as many were made in haste. It was a small defect, for the children would grow, but she said, "If these uniforms were for my children I don't care for them even if they were somewhat larger, but they will not do for the children. They've suffered all kinds of hardships, haven't they?"

She mended the uniforms and buttonholes herself together with tailors. This story always arouses excitement.

While touching the students' uniforms I remained stationary. These uniforms which were imbued with the noble spirit and care of Kim Jong Suk were like armour, uniforms of revolution.

Mother Kim Jong Suk devoted her life to children, the people and the motherland.

She sacrificed her youth on Mt. Paektu and went through all kinds of hardships but failed to live long enough to enjoy happiness in a liberated homeland. She is revered as a mother by all Korean people.

In the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery which I visited some time later I saw a bust of her.

Her generous eyes seemed to glitter like the sun's rays which bring forth flowers in spring. What a pity she died in the bloom of youth!

I was seized with sorrow, incredible, inexpressible sorrow. I remained for a long while in front of her memorial.

After making a round of the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery, I stopped again in front of her bust and expressed my profound condolences on behalf of the Cuban people.

I repeatedly stroked the student uniforms, unable to suppress the sorrow which gripped me.

Tears filled the eyes of many a student watching a foreign grandmother in such a state. I hugged them and said, "You are happy because you have parents who give you more love than the parents who gave birth to you. They are President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il."

When I entered a room members of a music circle welcomed me, singing the song *Cuba Yes, Yankee No.* I was much moved.

In Korea, all children sing of revolutionary Cuba and all fraternal peoples love and respect Cuba, which moves my heart.

I wrote in the visitors' book, "Study hard for the revolution and the glory of the motherland. You have fathers looking after you; don't spare your efforts."

I felt a great tug at parting. The children were reluctant to let go of my arms. Their looks convinced me that the future of Korea is secure since they continue the patriotic lineage.

A meeting with two female fighters of the anti-Japanese armed struggle was very impressive. Pak Jong Suk and Kim Hye Sun were well on in years but appeared to be hale and hearty.

I conversed with them with much respect.

It is not easy for women to serve in the regular army. How trying it must have been in guerrilla warfare!

Unlike in Cuba they had to march and cross mountains in 40 degrees of frost just like the men ... .

"In addition, in the camp", one fighter remarked, "we had to do washing, mend clothes and prepare meals. We had to work double."

"Not a day, not a month, not a year, but 15 years we had to fight in such conditions," the other fighter added.

They told me about Kim Jong Suk, the heroine of the anti-Japanese struggle who was the guard of General Kim Il Sung and related her history.

Kim Jong Suk saved the life of General Kim Il Sung in a hail of bullets at the risk of her own life, and when the guerrillas brought salt poisoned by the Japanese, she tested the prepared meal with the silver spoon she carried with her and found that it had been poisoned, they said.

"Each time we begin to miss Comrade Kim Jong Suk we visit the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery and revive her memory and talk about her. Everyone does. We find it difficult to leave. She was our ideal," they said.

Yes, one is reluctant to leave any place with deep associations.

Man's life is full of recollections ... .

They are now stoutly fighting for victory in the cause of socialism and for their invincible leader who is loved and respected by all Korean people as a father, as the father of Korea who clasps all his children to his bosom. It is like a luxuriant tree with many branches which bears fruit and has put down strong roots.

Conversing with them, I thought that they and all the women who fought valorously under the command of

General Kim Il Sung were pillars of the country and that Kim Jong Suk was the mother of the revolution.

4. A Just Idea Comes from the Depths of a Cave

"A just idea comes from the greatest depths of a cave," said our apostle and national hero of Cuba Jose Marti (1853-1895), writer and leader of the Second War for Cuba's Independence.

The reality of socialist Korea, which I saw during my visit, confirmed this notion for me.

I saw the most profound, the most just ideology and theory and the most valuable welfare imaginable.

From the beginning of his revolutionary activity President Kim Il Sung rejected dependence on, and the dogmatism of, existing revolutionary theories. He assessed the geographical location and the peculiarities of Korea's historical development, the lessons of nationalist and early communist movements in the country, and the exigencies of the world revolution which has entered a new stage of development and on this basis enunciated the Juche idea.

Applying this idea in the anti-Japanese armed struggle, he defeated the one million strong Japanese army and led the great war in the 50s.

Korea was the first country to rout US imperialism, likewise Cuba in Latin America.

Making the Juche idea the guiding principle of the Party for accomplishment of the revolutionary cause,

they won historic victory in the postwar reconstruction and establishment of a socialist system and have built a country for the welfare of the people on ruins which even birds abandoned.

The revolutionary theory enunciated by President Kim Il Sung in the flames of the arduous anti-Japanese struggle and subsequently developed and elaborated by Kim Jong Il, holds a shining place in the ideological history of mankind.

The Juche idea gave correct answers to all the theoretical and practical problem, including the setback of socialism and its causes which are presenting acute problems for the international communist movement at present, and was accepted with understanding by the revolutionary people of the world and inspired in them confidence in the rebirth of socialism and ultimate victory.

The collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe shook the revolutionaries of the world. Many wondered how it could have happened, that a country which had been building socialism for 70 years, a country which was considered a superpower, could collapse overnight, as it were.

No clear answer has been given.

At this moment Kim Jong Il's work *The Historical Lesson in Building Socialism and the General Line of Our Party* clarified the causes of the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and gave scientific answers to all of the most vexing questions.

The main cause, the work says, in a word, is that the people, the main agent of history, were not placed on centre stage, the main agent not strengthened, and its role not enhanced.

Socialism, Kim Jong Il stresses, is the society of the

popular masses and develops through their creative efforts; the comradeship and unity between the popular masses who are conscious of being masters, constitute the essence of socialist society and are the motive force of social development; it is the difference between socialist society and capitalist exploiting society. The basic way to accelerate socialist construction is to educate the popular masses in communist ideology giving precedence to human remoulding, and uniting the people around the Party so as to give full play to their revolutionary enthusiasm and creativity and enhance the role of the main agent.

Nina Andreyeva, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Bolshevik Communist Party, proved just how valid the propositions of the leader set forth in his work really are, when she analysed the traitorous acts of the leaders of the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern European countries in an article carried in the newspaper *Rodong Sinmun* dated October 26, 1992.

Gorbachev and his followers, she says in her article, instead of educating the popular masses in the communist ideal and rallying them behind the party, practised bureaucratism and arbitrariness in party work to disarm them ideologically and destroy socialism, thus isolating them from the party.

Ever since the USSR, supposedly a proletarian dictatorship, was converted into a "state of all the people", there occurred bureaucratism and other negative practices, including bribery and the sale of post, which destroyed the foundation of the Soviet state, paralyzed the fight against crime and thus lost the support of the people.

In her article Nina Andreyeva wrote that the so-called

"state of all the people" instilled in the people's minds the notion of "universal equality" and "pure democracy".

This bourgeois concept negated the impossibility of equal relations between the exploiters and the exploited and between the oppressors and the oppressed. "Right"-wing opportunism appeared in the Soviet Union with Khrushchev's "final victory of socialism" and further developed with Brezhnev's sophistry of "developed socialism". All these converted Gorbachev and his followers into traitors and lackeys of imperialism.

They still sang *The Internationale* up until recently, but now clamour about "the ruin of socialism", "historical labyrinth" and "unsuccessful experiment".

In her article "Invincible Is the Cause of Socialism" Nina Andreyeva taught us the lesson that in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe socialism collapsed because the people were looked down upon and arbitrariness was exercised over them.

Our country, Cuba, firmly defends socialism under the wise guidance of its Commander Fidel. In the difficult conditions of the US blockade, the thousands of hours of hostile radiobroadcasts, the intensive propaganda campaign and the infiltration of counterrevolutionary groups into Cuba, our people, united around Fidel, firmly stand under the slogan "Socialism or death, motherland or death, we will win victory."

Our just cause receives the unreserved support of the Korean people and the other progressive peoples of the world.

As clear evidence of this, the final declaration adopted at the European Solidarity Meeting held recently in Cuba demanded dismantlement of the naval base in Guantanamo, discontinuation of military threats against

Cuba, proclaimed 1994 as the Year of Solidarity with the Cuban People and announced the holding of a World Congress of Solidarity with the Cuban People from the 21st to the 23rd of November 1994.

This marks the beginning of the end of the US blockade against Cuba and our imminent victory.

In his work Kim Jong Il referred to other causes behind the collapse of European socialism, that is, failure to recognize the qualitative difference between socialism and capitalism, and invariably to maintain the basic principles of socialism in defending and realizing the independent demands and interests of the popular masses, principles which have to be firmly maintained not only in favourable circumstances under which smooth sailing is possible, but also during vicissitudes when it is necessary to raise wind for smooth sailing.

He also clarified that the circumstances and conditions of the revolutionary struggle may change, but not the principles and demands of socialism, and that to abandon the revolutionary principles in the struggle–socialism or capitalism–is an act of surrender and betrayal.

In her article, Nina Andreyeva, preoccupied with the future destiny of Russia and socialism, explained that the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union weakened its role and unified direction of the socialist state, adopted the concept of capitalist ownership and methods of capitalist economic management, and compromised with imperialism instead of fighting it, so that eventually this revisionist policy began to corrupt socialist society from within, while the introduction of "pluralism" under the signboard of "transformation" and "reconstruction" only accelerated the process of corruption.

She emphasized that the leaders of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and Gorbachev especially, with a view to making the popular masses waver ideologically, allowed "liberalism" in ideology, the "pluralistic party system" in politics and "diversification" in ownership, and that this bred individualism and liberalism in violation of the common interests of society, thus undermining the unity of the people and creating social chaos and disorder.

On my way to Korea I witnessed first hand the sad destiny of Russia through what I saw in Moscow. In the true sense of the word, the environment was horrible. Moscow is no longer Moscow.

Counterrevolution censured, through massacre, the people of the past generation who devoted all and risked their lives to build socialism. Old people and children roam the streets; marginalized, without shelter, and without social protection.

Unexpected shootings, tremendous explosions, haggling with street hawkers, gunfights between the Mafia and police, and prostitution....

Reading the work of Kim Jong Il during my visit to Korea, I clearly understood that "liberalism" in ideology and the "pluralistic party system" in politics open up a free path to counterrevolutionaries bent on destroying the people's power and the base of socialist society.

After reading Kim Jong Il's work *Abuses of Socialism Are Intolerable,* Ivan Novoda, a famous journalist from Russia, wrote in his article entitled "A Heavy Blow" that if one retreats one step in fear in face of the frantic offensive of the imperialists, one will take ten or even a thousand steps tomorrow.

We are fortunate to have the works *The Historical*

Lesson in Building Socialism and the General Line of Our Party, On the Fundamentals of Revolutionary Party Building and *Abuses of Socialism Are Intolerable* written by Kim Jong Il, because they demonstrate how to defend socialism when communists the world over are preoccupied with, and anxious to find, the causes behind the collapse of socialism.

These works have made a great contribution to all progressive mankind and the international communist movement.

Another reason for the ruin of socialism, the leader Kim Jong Il said, is that the parties of socialist countries did not maintain their independence in consolidating international solidarity.

The reasoning is as simple and clear as the story of "Columbus's egg"; the truth may be easy to understand, but difficult to discover.

He said that each party has the right to establish its political line in conformity with the specific conditions of the given country and pursue it independently. This is independence. In no way does it contradict the consolidation of international solidarity between different parties. His concept is not only of great significance, but is remarkable for its validity and cogency.

Nina Andreyeva and Ivan Novoda explained that in the past the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, considering itself to be the "centre" of the international communist movement, tended to impose its own line on the parties of other countries. They eloquently and scientifically defend the correctness of Kim Jong Il's theory when the parties from big countries force their line upon the parties of smaller nations, or the latter dance to the tune of the former without strengthen-

ing solidarity and cooperation, when one has no firm confidence in socialism nor a correct guiding principle and when one hesitates albeit only slightly, in face of temporary obstacles caused by imperialism, the cause of socialism begins to falter.

Thanks to Kim Jong Il's works, which have clarified the causes behind the collapse of socialism in some countries on the basis of the Juche idea, revolutionary people the world over can consider these works a guide in the struggle to revive socialism, and can be confident that the cause of socialism will ultimately triumph.

All progressive people the world over express respect and admiration for the creation of the Juche idea by President Kim Il Sung at the beginning of the anti-Japanese armed struggle, when he laid the ideological and methodological foundations for its development in all fields of politics, economy and culture of the country and materialization of the idea by his unique successor, Kim Jong Il in socialist revolution and construction.

Those opportunists who regard the people's adoration for their leader as a personality cult are deeply mistaken.

Such people should visit Korea and experience for themselves the veneration, respect and affection of the Korean people for their leader Kim Il Sung, which is entirely based on his greatness and noble qualities. The great leader dedicated his whole life to the welfare of his people and it corresponds to them as it corresponds to the affection of the generous father who gave birth to them.

This reaffirms the truth of a Korean song: *If you do not exist, nor does the motherland, and neither do we.*

When I, a Cuban, was received by the President, I

admired and respected him for his noble spirit, modesty, humane treatment and warmth.

When I read the works of Kim Jong Il and acquainted myself with his revolutionary exploits, I was impressed by his profound ideology, extraordinary intelligence and outstanding leadership.

Probably more so the Koreans themselves!

5. Even If Our Planet Were to Disappear...

On December 3, 1993, when I was writing these lines in my residence situated in beautiful spot looking out over a pleasant panorama, my interpreter told me to watch the television program covering the "National Meeting of Models of Communist Virtue".

Communist virtue? The information was new and very suggestive.

Prompted by curiosity, I wanted to know what was happening at the meeting. On the TV screen there were seen the faces of speakers and listeners, some in tears. Applause broke out.

At the meeting publicity was given to the exemplary deeds of workers, farmers, intellectuals and soldiers, modest men and women who had demonstrated the noble spirit of sacrifice and love for their fellow countrymen and society. This seized my heart.

The noble spirit for society and collective, of the workers, farmers, intellectuals, servicemen, all the people, men and women, young and old, young couples who live with an old person without family, girls who have adopted

and raised orphans, young people who have married disabled ex-soldiers, and hotel employees who found and returned money lost by customers ....

The announcer read out information about the progress of the meeting. How exemplary is Korean society where such impressive meeting is held! I thought. I do not know whether the like of this meeting has ever been held anywhere else in the world. It could only be convened in socialist Korea, I think.

In this country many people even laid down their lives for their leader, their comrades and their motherland, the like of which can hardly be found in other countries of the world.

Yes, the builders of the West Sea Barrage, who manifested their invincible resolution to conquer nature, using the spirit of Chollima to do so, the flame of Chollima kindled on the land of Kangson, the system of socialist economic management created in Taean, the construction of Pyongyang's Metro, all the monumental structures and construction of paradise in Korea–all this is founded on these good communist virtues and on the single-hearted unity of the people, the Party and their leaders.

Korean society is based on the philosophical principle of the Juche idea, "Man is the master of all things and the decisive factor in everything" and its members constitute a great family who help each other on the basis of the collective principle "One for all and all for one". The Korean people are so educated.

Unity is essential in winning victory and division implies defeat. This is quite right. Without ideological education and without unity between the people, their leaders and the party, it is impossible to build socialist society.

The collapse of socialism in the USSR, an economic

and military superpower, is attributable to the abandonment of ideological work, the collective principle and lack of mutual assistance.

18 million Soviet communists left to crumble in a few days what took 74 years to build!

They did not oppose it because they did not love their ideology and did not love it, because they had become degenerate and corrupt. Seen in this light such a collapse is quite understandable.

The Korean people united in one voice around their leaders, the invincible Kim Il Sung, and Kim Jong Il, and have ever since been carrying out revolution and socialist construction with their efforts, their resources, their independence and sovereignty, and their revolutionary theory.

The Korean people know that unity means victory and division, defeat.

The Cuban people also know this. When I recall our history, Zanjon and Baragua spring to mind.

"Baragua is the most glorious place in our history," remarked Jose Marti. Our people has always been an invincible Baragua. It was demonstrated by Antonio Maceo in the First War of Independence in 1868-78, by Maximo Gomez, Marti and Maceo in 1895, by Moncada in 1953 which was a "small motor that lent impetus to the great of 1959". It is now demonstrated by the fight against Yankee aggression and the blockade. As our commander Che Guevara said, "Don't give an inch!"

The party and the people of Cuba headed by Fidel Castro are firmly united and will never make any concessions.

Our will is reflected in our irrevocable slogan "Socialism or death, motherland or death."

Unity is the source of our unbreakable strength.

Korea has demonstrated this on many occasions. At present Korea is stubbornly fighting against the "nuclear inspection" being imposed by the United States.

The Korean people will continue to advance under the banner of the Juche idea, no matter how frantically the United States strives to break the will of this people.

The Cuban people are toughening their stance in face of the danger that is being aggravated. As Fidel said, "Adrenaline augments."

Korea is in solidarity with Cuba; any attempt to blockade Korea is doomed to failure, said President Kim Il Sung in his reminiscences *With the Century.*

You could sooner break a rock with an egg than destroy Korea. The National Meeting of Models of Communist Virtue proves this.

Imperialists should know that the globe may disappear but the unity between the leader and the Korean people can never be broken.

6. Korea, the Beacon of Hope for Humanity

The Golden Age of Asia,
Korea was a country raising its lamps.
Again the lamp will be lit,
We are waiting for it
To illumine the East.

This is a passage from the poem *Korea* by the

famous Indian poet, Tagore, written in 1926.

Today it can be said that Korea illuminates the world as the beacon of socialism.

Visiting various places of Korea, I felt this to be a reality.

Most impressive was a visit to the Myohyang Mountains where I stayed for four days and visited the International Friendship Exhibition full of rare treasures which were sent to President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il by the heads of state, parties and political and social figures. I also visited the modern and beautiful village of Hyangsan and its elegant hotel, the Hyangsan Barrage, a mineral spring, promenade along the Chongchon River, and the Hyangsan Revolutionary Museum where I chatted with its amiable curator and the charming children of the Hyangsan Senior Middle School who received me warmly. All this left an indelible impression upon me.

Everywhere I went I discovered something important, be it the exhibits in the exhibition, the broad avenues of the town of Hyangsan, the benches arranged along the shore of the river, the newly opened mountain track, or the merry songs of the children....

The life maxim of President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il is "Iminwichon", which implies considering the people as heaven: the truth that if one believes in and depends on the people, one always wins victory, but if one keeps aloof from them one suffers a thousand failures.

In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, where the people are considered as king, hospitals, the Supreme Assembly, the lowest units of administration, and the army all bear the epithet "People".

President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il always put the people's interests above all others and desire that they are happy. Precious gifts are not kept to themselves but are displayed in the exhibition hall so that all the people can see and enjoy their beauty.

This is how the leaders manifest their noble qualities and clearly shows that Korea has innumerable friends throughout the world.

All the beauty which caught my eye from the observation balcony of the exhibition is well expressed in the poem written by President Kim Il Sung himself.

Myohyang Mountains on an Autumn Day

From the balcony I have the most glorious view in the world.
Myohyang Mountains has been famous for its beauty from time immemorial.
The exhibition hall stands with its green eaves on the wing
And, with Piro Peak rising above, exalts the dignity of the nation.

Every autumn every mountain across the land is dyed crimson.
In the new age of the Workers' Party the sunlight shines brighter.
These beautiful leaves are now more scarlet
And embroider a new history for the mountains and rivers of this land.

A country once beset by subservience and ruined by

so much strife
Is now crowded with goodwill missions from every
corner of the world.
A pride this ancient nation has never enjoyed in five
thousand years.
That will be handed down to posterity with the land of
golden tapestry.

It is a grand poem, in my opinion.

I appreciated its meaning, skirting round the town of Hyangsan at the foot of the Myohyang Mountains, which appeared rather to be the capital of the province.

Buildings of more than ten storeys, high modern industry and commerce, primary and secondary schools, and a modern hotel in the form of a pyramid with a commanding view of the Myohyang Mountains....

Taking a round of all these, I realized the dedication of their leaders and the Party to the welfare of the people.

The Myohyang Mountains is a good place for alpinists.

Under the personal direction of Kim Jong Il, tens of kilometres of mountain track were laid which span the beautiful passage and cascades of a crystal-clear stream. The working people of Korea, as well as foreign visitors, take rest and recreation at this marvelous place. The Myohyang Mountains is a place of great beauty.

When I was captivated by the beauty of the mountains, the melody of the song called *I think* drifted to me.

I think till late at night:
Where does happiness come from?

I asked myself, what is the source of happiness for

the Korean people?

This happiness blooms owing to the indefatigable labour of President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il of the Korean people.

There is a saying, "Birds seek clean places and people seek happiness."

Mankind has long sought true happiness during its long history, but it does not come of its own accord, and no people has enjoyed as much happiness as the Korean people.

The United States boasts of civilization, prosperity and liberty.... Are American people as happy as the Korean people? No, they are not. Does happiness lie in the brilliant lights of a city and in the splendid houses of the rich? Can those who live in Harlem feel happy?

Are the millions of unemployed who live under bridges and on the street happy? Or the hungry children who seek food in garbage cans, or the victims of violence and delinquency? Is this really happiness?

No, it is not.

True happiness for people is not found in New York, Paris, London, or Tokyo.... I am convinced that happiness can be found only under the socialist system where everything is done and determined for the good of the people. Cuba and Korea are irrefutable examples of this.

Cuba, headed and led by Fidel, is building socialism and defending its gains. We can do so because there is an indestructible unity between the people, Fidel and the party.

Like the Korean people, the Cuban people are convinced that they will build socialism to the end, the hope and ideal of all progressive people the world over.

In this sense, socialist Korea is the focus of attention

of the world and the beacon of hope for mankind.

7. Trees Must Be Allowed to Grow Straight

The education of mankind has been going on for millennia but no one could say that it has occupied the important place due to it.

In the world there exist hundreds of millions of illiterate people who have been denied schooling. In the United States, which pretends to be the richest and most civilized country, there are 30 million illiterate people, including young people in their twenties: one in three inhabitants cannot read advertisements on newspapers, nor count money. It is fair to say that the United States is the "kingdom of illiteracy".

In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is making rapid progress, life is not luxurious and the inhabitants do not live in clover, but there are no beggars and no unemployment–all enjoy the fruit of their labour and lead a happy and civilized life.

With a view to satisfying, in the era of the Workers' Party, the centuries-old desire of the people to eat boiled white rice and meat soup, be dressed in silk and live in tiled houses, the Party is waging a vigorous struggle to carry out socialist economic construction and provide the people with high culture and education, notwithstanding that great efforts are put into national defence to counter the aggressive posturing of the United States.

The development of education in this country is no

more than 40 years old if the difficult years of the Fatherland Liberation War (1950-53) are not taken into account.

Today Korea has been converted into a paradise of education, the envy of progressive people the world over and is called a "model country for education".

Attaching great importance to education for the development of the people, President Kim Il Sung energetically promoted education in spite of economic limitations caused by the war.

He set the education of the people and the young generation in particular as an important revolutionary task which would play a decisive role in determining whether the nation would prosper or go to ruin.

To what did he give priority, while waging the anti-Japanese armed struggle?

I came to learn about this when making a round of the Korean Revolution Museum situated on Mansu Hill.

The guide explained to me that Kim Il Sung requested that new guerrilla recruits be taught how to read and write before teaching them how to shoot a rifle.

He began the revolution with educational work. Thanks to his persistent efforts in this area, the habit of study was established among guerrilla troops and schools were set up for children in the liberated areas.

The content of the education was patriotic: Korea is a country where picturesque mountains, crystal-clear rivers and medicinal waters abound, and where intelligent and brave people live. But the country was colonized by the Japanese imperialists. We should not beg for independence, but fight, arms in hand, to win back the lost country. The Japanese imperialists are armed with rifles, machine guns and artillery, but if we, intelligent and

brave people, are united in thought and purpose and fight valorously, we will surely liberate the country.

The guerrillas, armed with the Juche idea, claimed victory in the arduous anti-Japanese struggle.

In all the places I visited I saw the importance President Kim Il Sung attached to education and his aim to prepare revolutionary communist and patriotic cadres.

Before liberation of the country there was no secondary school in Mangyongdae, the birthplace of President Kim Il Sung. After liberation villagers there set up a secondary school and had intended to name it after President Kim Il Sung to demonstrate the infinite respect and love for the leader, the sun of the nation and hero of independence.

When informed of its construction and the intention of the villagers, he made them desist from the idea and named it "Samhung", which means acquisition of knowledge, morality and strong physiques. These three elements should be acquired in order to make the country rich and powerful, he said, and made them the line of education of the rising generation.

He showed great attention to and solicitude for education from the very first days of the new motherland's construction.

When he was elected Chairman of the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea, the production of pencils was placed on the agenda of the first session of the committee. It was unique in the history of world education.

In those days in Korea, which had been a colonial semi-feudal country, there was no factory which could fulfil the task, because the Japanese destroyed everything when fleeing. The primary task of the new people's power was to produce pencils.

He declared to his people and the world that the new motherland had to begin building itself while educating children for the present and future and pointed to the need to do so constantly. At the height of the war he regarded education as a decisive battle.

There are innumerable anecdotes in this respect. One day, at the height of war, he learned that the lessons of the new school year for children were going to be deferred because of failure to transport in time the textbooks printed in a remote place in the rear. In those days the transport of munitions, which were required at the front, was difficult because of the enemy's constant bombing. The functionaries who had to carry out the task of delivering textbooks were reluctant to risk doing so.

In this critical situation he gave the order that textbooks be supplied to all schools before the start of the new school year, even if it required the mobilization of military trains and transport.

Indeed, it is impossible to hear the story without feeling some emotion.

I thought of the great boldness of having delivered textbooks when it was necessary to transport primarily munitions. It was his iron will and conviction of final victory that prompted him to take such a resolution.

In the period of building the country following the liberation war when all had been reduced to ruins, he saw to it that textbooks were printed before anything else on good-quality paper, and only then periodicals and other publications, although a piece of paper was valued at more than a gram of gold.

Education in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was thus initiated and has continued to develop under his auspices, attaining its high peak and bearing

abundant fruit under his care and protection.

When the clock of the Grand People's Study House strikes, the ringing of bells in the branch schools resounds over the remote mountains; when the voices of children reading in schools are heard, the entire people echo them and lessons are also given in the small school on the outlying islet with a lighthouse where there are only three pupils.

In Korea trains are run for schoolchildren in remote mountains and buses are operated for one or several pupils in out-of-the-way villages.

One cannot help but admire the reality and say that it is indeed a country of education, a country of learning.

Visiting Pyongyang Senior Middle School No. 1 situated on the picturesque shore of the Pothong River, I marveled at its large scale, diverse equipment, modern teaching facilities, the tidy appearance of the students and their proper behaviour in the classroom in the face of an unexpected visit.

"If I were born again, I would like to study in this school," I said to my interpreter when she smiled understandingly. How good it would be to be a child again!

The director of the school kindly told me the history of the school.

"In the past teachers were preoccupied with raising the level of laggards instead of paying attention to the able and talented children. Kim Jong Il saw to it that talented children were picked out across the country and educated so that other children, imitating their example, exerted themselves to reach their level."

Thanks to this measure, Pyongyang Senior Middle School No. 1 was set up for talented pupils and became a model for other schools to emulate.

His extraordinary wisdom and teaching method are really impressive and the results achieved prove this.

This school was once unique, the only one in the country – a true pioneer.

Later similar schools were set up in each province and their numbers gradually increased.

I asked the director whether all the schools in the country would reach the level of this school. He replied in the affirmative, smiling.

It seemed to me that the day is not far off when this affirmation becomes a reality thanks to the concern and dedication towards education shown by Kim Jong Il.

When I visited the Hyangsan Senior Middle School in the Myohyang Mountains region, I saw the large scale and diversity of knowledge being taught there. A school in the seat of a county is like one in the capital of a province!

The appearance of the schoolchildren there was the same as in the city. Clean uniforms, well-equipped classrooms where one could obtain an advanced education, computer rooms, practice rooms, radio and TV laboratories, chemistry, physics and biology laboratories, a gymnasium and a recreation room. ...

Priority is given to education in this country. It is easy to prove. President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il show great concern and solicitude for education. The universal 11-year education is free of charge and compulsory, including one year of preschool education during which the subjects of arithmetic, physical education, intelligence, song and dance are taught. The abilities of the kindergarten children are really marvelous.

Elementary education is for four years, secondary education for six years and a university education – five

years. A medical education takes seven years. One studies for 19-21 years in all.

A large contingent of intellectuals, some 1,730,000 intellectuals, has been produced by the education system, including the study-while-you-work scheme. Students study in almost 300 universities and colleges.

The state supplies students with uniforms and textbooks free of charge at the beginning of the new term of instruction and grants scholarships to them. School supplies are offered to families at modest prices.

The sole duty of students is to study well.

The love of President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il for the children of the country is boundless.

Once when visiting a village in a mountainous area, the President learned that the living conditions of farmers there were inferior to those on the plain. All day he toured the place thinking up ways to improve the living standards of farmers there.

The farmers felt very anxious, for they could not offer him an adequate place to take a rest and relieve his fatigue.

After that they built a good house for President Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il who would visit again.

One day Kim Jong Il passed the village. The villagers invited him to take a rest in the house and told him how they had felt when they had failed to attend to the President as they had wished.

Kim Jong Il expressed his gratitude, sank into thought for a while, and then said that the house should be used as a school, which would please the people.

Thus, a school was established in the house and named "Undok", which means benevolence in Korean.

Such anecdotes can be heard across the country.

The Mangyongdae Schoolchildren's Palace calls forth the admiration of those who behold its majesty and installations. Its special architecture is full of beauty.

In each room they welcomed us with applause, while in one room children skilfully sang the song *Cuba Yes, Yankee No*. We sang together to the tune of the music and I sang *Korea Yes, Yankee No*.

The solidarity and friendship demonstrated by the Korean people for Cuba and Fidel made me feel very happy and, at the same time, proud to be maintaining and cementing them between the two peoples fighting in the same trench against US imperialism, the common enemy of all progressive people the world over.

In the embroidery room I was struck to see children under five embroidering various floral designs and paysage stitch by stitch.

In the calligraphy room one girl there presented me with a scroll, as a souvenir of my visit, on which she then wrote "Friendship" with a writing brush.

The girls who were learning to play on the *kayagum*, a traditional Korean musical instrument, gave us a concert full of patriotic sentiments.

In this country there are many children with musical and other talents.

A girl aged seven called O Un Byol exhibited her pictures in art exhibitions held in Moscow, Jakarta, Bangkok and Singapore and aroused the admiration of the wife of a head of state and princess. When she was five years old, she won first place in the international children's art exhibition.

Another 7-year-old Korean girl was placed eighth and won a special prize at the World *Go* Champio-

nship, defeating adults, the champions of their countries. Another girl of 12 won first place in the World Gymnastics Championship held in the United States; as a result the flag of the DPRK was hoisted in the sky over the citadel of imperialism and the Korean national anthem played.

Among children of preschool age there are many who speak foreign languages fluently and who are able to solve difficult mathematical problems.

Yes, in Korea talent is in bloom because the painstaking and affectionate attention of the supreme leaders of Korea is like the sun which warms the earth and grows dense woods.

"Children are the hope of the world," remarked Jose Marti; "Nothing is more valuable than children," said our leader Fidel.

In the DPRK children are correctly educated in patriotism and prepared for the bright future of socialism and communism.

The educationalists of the DPRK are professional revolutionaries. It is they who are instrumental in ensuring that the children are educated in a collectivist spirit as taught by the Juche idea and disciplined, because socialist and communist society requires that the formation of communist man begin at an early age.

The teachers are revolutionaries and the cultivators of human ideology.

The usefulness of a tree depends on the attention and dedication of botanists. There is a Cuban poem, which reads in part:

When a tree grows crooked
Its trunk will never be straightened

Because it is the innate vice
With which it has grown.

8. The Country Which Recognizes a Writing Brush

Since the division of society into classes, intellectuals have been considered a social stratum composed of individuals of different class origins, an intermediate stratum which can serve any class.

Classes attracted intellectuals when their services were needed and in accordance with their attitude towards them.

Intellectuals have been blamed many times or praised because of their dual character.

In many former socialist countries the problem was always posed as being highly complicated and difficult to solve.

President Kim Il Sung treated intellectuals with a new and original criterion for the first time in history, considering them as the motive force in the revolutionary struggle and in social development.

Since the beginning of the revolution he has valued them as independent beings apart from their knowledge and talent, and did not consider them a means for revolution but an integral part of revolution, explorers and masters of society with whom it is necessary to build communist society together.

When the Workers' Party of Korea was founded, a writing brush together with a hammer and sickle were

engraved as the emblem of the Party in accordance with its appreciation of intellectuals.

A writing brush, the symbol of intellectuals!

In many countries the importance of a writing brush or a pen is appreciated, but the value and importance of those who use them are not recognized.

People envy the DPRK because the country recognizes a writing brush.

Those who cultivate wood do not neglect a tree. They tend it with care and attention.

The policy towards intellectuals of President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il penetrates all parts of the country like a song.

I had opportunities to meet and talk with many famous intellectuals of the DPRK. All of them admired and were grateful to the policy of their leaders.

Once, before New Year's day, Kim Jong Il was reading piles of letters wishing him good health and happiness in the New Year.

These letters were from the directors of mines, the Hero of Labour smelter he knew, the chairman of management board of a farm on the west coast, a girl who left the city and returned to her birthplace to become a farmer, commanding officers of troops and captains of trading ships....

He was reading the letters and greeting cards with a smile when his eyes fell on one in which poets wished him good health and a long life and expressed their determination to share the destiny of the Party to the end.

He immediately sent them a reply letter, which was carried in the first page of the Party organ and aroused great emotion not only among the poets who received it,

but also among all the intellectuals of the country.

It was a manifestation of trust in the intellectuals.

The Korean intellectuals, in their turn, strengthened their resolve to be faithful to the leader and share the Party's destiny under any circumstances.

I met many intellectuals. Some were of landlord origin, some came from workers' families, some, from peasant families and still others from soldier families.

One of them was a war orphan. He lost his mother and a brother in the US bombing and was himself badly wounded. He still bore scars on his left arm. He was pulled from the ruins after the bombing. Under the care of President Kim Il Sung he studied in the school for the children of martyrs, a school imbued with the noble spirit of Kim Jong Suk, and graduated from university to become an excellent writer.

The intellectual of landlord origin came over to the north after liberation and now enjoys genuine happiness and a dignified life under the care of the President.

The intellectual of peasant origin fought self-sacrificingly during the Fatherland Liberation War. After he was demobilized he returned to his studies.

All of them admire and respect President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il as their proper fathers and teachers.

"In science there are no frontiers, but we scientists have the socialist motherland of Juche." So said a Korean intellectual at the Intellectuals' Congress held in Pyongyang in December 1992.

With this conviction they believe President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il at any time and under any circumstance, no matter whether they are in the enemy-held zone, on a solitary island, or in prison.

I had the honour of talking with Ri In Mo, who took

part in the Fatherland Liberation War as a war correspondent. When he was taken prisoner in battle, he was brutally tortured and at times his tormentors tried to lure him away from the path of communism with empty promises: if he had put his signature to the declaration of defection they forced upon him, he could have been released.

Ri In Mo did not yield and suffered solitary imprisonment for 34 years. His iron will and profound communist militancy are known to the world. He is the incarnation of Faith and Will. Recently he was repatriated to the motherland, the DPRK, to the side of President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il.

There is a Korean saying, "In ten years even mountains and rivers will change." In 34 years mountains and rivers would have changed three times, but Ri In Mo's unwavering faith in the President and the Party did not falter.

I asked him with great respect what the secret was of his inflexible will. "It was my confidence that the road illuminated by our General is the correct road, the road to paradise for the people and to the new world of communism. If I had had no such faith, I could not have withstood them for even 34 days."

Rodong Sinmun, the organ of the Workers' Party of Korea carried Ri In Mo's poem dedicated to the dear leader Kim Jong Il, which reads in part:

Whenever the tempting declaration of defection
harasses me,
The father leader is in my heart,
The dear leader, son of Mt. Paektu,
Stands by me with inexhaustible strength.

The years passed and my hair turned grey
But you have always been my heaven
That's why I had the same faith in my thirties, in the prime of youth.
That's why I have the same will in my seventies, in the evening of my life.

Such are Korean intellectuals. They firmly believe in the Party and vice versa.

They are united around the Party and their leaders and brave vicissitudes without wavering.

I thought of the destiny of intellectuals in the countries which were once called "socialist countries".

In these countries the writing brush was not appreciated nor recognized. In some countries the intellectuals who did not follow party policy were denounced.

They were not regarded as component parts of the revolution but as temporary companions. No attention was paid to their life. Thus they had no faith in the party and gave it a wide berth.

Today intellectuals in those countries support neither the party nor the state, but slander and betray them.

They who once sang the song *The Internationale* now praise the imperialism which has corrupted them.

What a tragedy!

Most of them emigrate from their countries of origin. They "export their knowledge" to Western countries.

Imperialists entice them away at reduced prices. Political and economic circles in those countries fear that economic development will be retarded by decades because of the "brain drain" but are incapable of preventing it.

In north Korea the necessity of "intellectualizing all

members of society" is actively propagated. In the light of the fact that only a few countries in the world have eliminated illiteracy, this is a high goal, the foundation for which was already laid by President Kim Il Sung nearly 50 years ago.

While visiting Kim Il Sung University, I came to learn that before liberation there was no university in Korea and that the university was founded at the suggestion of the President.

Some were of the opinion that it was impossible to build. In reality there was a scarcity of professors, materials and funds.

Nevertheless, it was necessary to set it up for the future of the country and so eliminate centuries of backwardness and build a socialist industrial country, a communist paradise.

Construction of the university received the patriotic contribution of farmers who donated rice cultivated in the first year after liberation. President Kim Il Sung personally sent letters to intellectuals dispersed in all parts of the country and dispatched functionaries to invite them to take part in setting up the university.

Thus Kim Il Sung University, the first one in the DPRK, was founded.

In 1951 I visited the university, which was destroyed in the bombing. Its principal building, the only one remaining, was magnificently rebuilt into a scientific centre for the country.

Today in the DPRK there are hundreds of universities and colleges where a great number of specialists are educated.

Another important scientific institution which helps all to attain the highest intellectual level possible is the

Grand People's Study House situated in the heart of Pyongyang.

Distinguished for its Korean style architecture with a roof resembling a flying crane, it is situated at the back of Kim Il Sung Square and has a total floor space of 100,000 square metres.

What a contrast to capitalist countries!

In these countries they only build "palaces" for Presidents and government buildings in the central zones of the capital, but in the DPRK, a palace in which anyone can study has been erected in the heart of Pyongyang.

President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, who always paid profound attention to education in the country, reserved a site in the central part of the city for special use. People were interested to know what building would be erected there and marveled at seeing the Grand People's Study House when it had been built.

The guide of the study house explained, "The entire people study here. The DPRK is one very large school. All of us have great enthusiasm for learning. Before liberation we were not able to study. Today our President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il have provided the people with this palace.

"It has a stock of 30 million books, a total length of bookshelves of 165 km, over 600 rooms, 5,000 seats. Every day over 10,000 people visit it in order to study. It also serves as a correspondence university for the working people of the country."

In the DPRK everyone studies: the ranks of intellectuals, the country's wealth, increase daily.

How bright the future of the young students studying in this house is!

My thoughts turned to my own country.

There, too, the writing brush is recognized and respected!

Cuban intellectuals support the socialist revolution and have always said:

"All for the revolution, nothing against the revolution!"

What happiness people enjoy in our socialist countries, the DPRK and Cuba, where the writing brush is recognized and respected!

9. "If We Are Threatened with a Pistol, We'll Respond with Cannons"

When fascist Germany was defeated in the mid 40s, the world learned of the horrors of Oswiecim and Majdanek.

The crimes and atrocities committed by the Yankees in Sinchon, in the northern half of Korea, were far more horrendous. In the two months that the US troops occupied this small city, they massacred over 35,000 inhabitants.

"Kill everyone of them, whether they are children or the old; don't let your hand tremble in killing them," declared the US army commandant. Only the murderers of the American Indians, who regarded them as an "inferior race", could utter such a thing.

When I was spending the most pleasant days of my life in new socialist Korea, my thoughts turned to the events that had occurred 40 years before.

I wanted to revisit Sinchon, situated in the plain area, approximately 80 kilometres away from Pyongyang.

Traveling by train, I recalled the land once drenched in blood, and the US army commander who ordered his soldiers to kill all living things without mercy: "Kill, kill...." Sinchon was literally a sea of blood. Even the crepuscule of the evening turned red.

Our investigation group pried into the crimes committed by the Yankees at the powder houses in Wonam-ri. Mothers with their children were detained there. "They are too happy," the US army commander Harrison said, "Separate them". His order was executed and the air was rent with the cries of children and their mothers calling to each other.

The mothers and children were separated into two different powder houses and were murdered with burning gasoline and grenades. "It was with such heartrending knowledge that I arrived in Sinchon.

It was Sinchon, but did not look as it had been. Its appearance had totally changed. Broad streets lined with modern apartment houses... I called first at the museum.

Photographs and other materials testifying the cruelties of the Yankees were on exhibition there. There were many visitors. Among them were children wearing red neckerchiefs. I could read hatred towards the enemy on their faces. We climbed the low Ryonkkot Hill. Two large tombs of 400 mothers and 102 children who were killed in the powder houses lie on the hill.

When I entered a powder depository sooted black by the fire I saw a group of pupils taking a pledge. Girls and boys were shedding tears.

My interpreter told me that they were "a group of

Korean youngsters resident in Japan. They visited the homeland every year."

As I entered they looked at me accusingly.

Their attitude changed the instant an explanation was given as to why I was there. "I am a Cuban, I was here 43 years ago as a member of the International Women's Commission to investigate the crimes the US imperialists committed against the Korean people. We denounced the US imperialists' barbarities before the world and the Cuban people."

They applauded my remark.

My heart was filled with emotion. They asked me, a witness, to tell what I had seen for myself in the spring of 1951.

I could hardly refuse! Few words are required to understand! My heart failed me and I fell silent. They gazed up at me. They seemed to think it strange that an old foreign woman was more heartstricken than they were.

A little while later, I related everything that occurred at the time.

Already sobs were heard from among the students. I told them about the cries of women and old folk and children; about a girl whose family were all massacred–the father put to death, crucified, the mother had her breast slashed off, while the girls' brothers were buried alive.

I told them that the enemy killed a baby in the womb of its pregnant mother, that the people of Sinchon and all whom we met spoke of how to exact vengeance, instead of crying for the victims and that they believed that they would win when led by General Kim Il Sung.

I told them not to be tearful and that this was no time

for whimpering but a time to fight as their ancestors had done. I continued:

"The Yankees once turned Sinchon into a sea of blood. Today they occupy south Korea and the naval base in Guantanamo of Cuba. They are brutal. But, don´t be fearful of them. You must stand up to them. You know the story of the elephant that is afraid of a mouse, well there is a Korean legend about the hedgehog that beats a tiger.

"The peoples of our two countries will ultimately defeat Yankee imperialism, the common enemy."

If the imperialists should attack, the Korean people will crush them, whoever they may be, in a single blow. The same can be said for Cuba.

Cuba demonstrated her strength in the battle of Playa Giron and the DPRK won the war of 1950.

Recently, in face of the "Team Spirit 93" military exercises the Yankees carried out under the pretext of supposed "nuclear development" in the north, the DPRK paraded its steel-like will and might.

We were very apprehensive about the friends of the DPRK, and all peace-loving people dreaded a recurrence of the situation like that in Iraq. However, the DPRK stood firm as a rock amidst the political and military confrontations and in the spirit of Mt. Paektu and with the will power they displayed in the 50s they repulsed the enemy's pressure and forced them into a dialogue and laying down their weapons.

One must fight the way the Korean people do and be as firm as the Cuban people in face of the US blockade aimed at vanquishing Cuba and starving us to death.

Our Supreme Commander-in-Chief Fidel sternly condemned the blockade policy of the US and reaffirmed the

adamantine will of our people to build socialism and defend the gains we have secured with the victorious revolution of January 1, 1959.

The world's people are voicing solidarity with Cuba.

In far away Europe 1994 was declared a year of solidarity with Cuba.

The imperialists are slandering our motherland. But under the leadership of Fidel tremendous successes and great achievements have been recorded by our motherland and revolution.

Our country, though a small and developing state, managed to liquidate illiteracy in the space of a single year and is implementing free education and medical care; we have no unemployment; all working people in town and country enjoy a stable existence thanks to the benevolence of the state.

The Cuban people are faithful to their motherland, but the US imperialists are continuing to shamelessly lie about Cuba. As Fidel said, they stand on our neck, then ask why we can't breathe.

The world's people support us and demand that the criminal blockade against Cuba be lifted.

Our people will defend to the end the proud slogan, "Socialism or Death, Motherland or Death, We Will Win."

Paying a visit to the DPRK, Sinchon in particular, I renewed my determination to fight against Yankee imperialism to the finish.

Touring the DPRK and inspecting this museum here, I became convinced that the intensification of patriotic education among the working people, especially the younger generation, was very important in cultivating the spirit of winning the final victory against the enemy and defending socialism.

The DPRK is very strong, both economically and militarily, and the entire people is armed politically and ideologically.

Everywhere I heard the people say, "Victory to the defender, and death to the abandoner, of socialism!" Every day they march ahead with such conviction and resolution.

Should the enemy dare to violate the DPRK, the Korean people will rise as one and drive them into the sea.

Korea, which despises the attacker, but adores the nation's defender, will respond with cannons should anyone threaten with a pistol.

Korea is a country powerful politically, economically and militarily. I witnessed this with my own eyes.

10. Water Flows beneath the Ice-Bound River

It was autumn when I arrived in the DPRK, but now it is winter.

I was shown to many places which exemplify modern Korea: historical sites associated with the roots of revolution, political organizations inspired by the uplifted banner of Juche, industrial complexes that implement the line of a self-sustaining national economy, organs engaged in performing the Party's policy on the arts and literature, hospitals, schools, kindergartens....

Everywhere I sensed the sorrow of national partition and the unanimous desire for national reunification.

The country's reunification!

Everybody spoke of this, and reunifying the country is the supreme task of the Korean people. It is the irresistible stream of time.

The opponents of reunification are the Yankee imperialists and the south Korean puppet leaders headed by Kim Yong Sam who are aggravating the situation on the Korean peninsula with every passing day by staging nuclear manoeuvres.

The south Korean government, at the instigation of outside forces, is openly declaring that it does not "exclude military countermeasures" and noisily clamours about the "completion of full preparations for emergency," under the pretext of the imaginary "suspicion of nuclear development" and "alarming military moves" in the north. They declared a "state of emergency alert" and mobilized over 4.5 million troops in the "Eagle 93", "Hwarang" and other war games directed against the north, thus exacerbating the situation on the peninsula.

In the international arena, they are calling for "sanctions" and a "system of international cooperation" against the north.

Such information, printed periodicals and broadcast over the radio, roused my indignation.

The south Korean authorities and the US are seeking to trigger another round of hostilities between brethren of a single motherland, which may well flare up into another world war.

At Phanmunjom I observed the concrete walls built all along the 240 kilometre-long Military Demarcation Line.

From Sinchon city I headed for Phanmunjom where I was cordially received by soldiers of the People's Army in active service there.

First I was shown into a house and encountered a map showing the distribution of nuclear weapons in south Korea.

Explanations were given regarding their geographical position, the area and population of Korea and the reasons for Korea's division into the north and the south along the 38th parallel.

Korea, with an area covering 220,000 square kilometres, was divided in 1945 by the US army's occupation of south Korea.

The explanation given by an officer helped me grasp the situation more clearly.

Under the sign, "Divide and rule", the US massacred people everywhere, occupied the territory of others and oppressed still others.

This division split the nation into revolutionary and reactionary forces, into patriots and traitors, and created "a safe zone" for the imperialists. As a result the imperialists further expanded the sphere of their colonial rule, squandered the wealth of another country and forced the divided nation to suffer great hardships.

The south Korean people are the victims of this divisive and colonialist policy.

The US considers south Korea, the part of the peninsula sandwiched between the oceanic and continental forces, to be the "centre of geopolitical gravitation in the world" and the bridgehead for penetration into the Asian continent.

"The United States seems destined by providence to reduce the globe to ruins," said the liberator Simon Boliver.

The US ambitions are immense.

Today this wild ambition is evident in Korea. In order

to maintain their position in the Pacific area they divided a homogeneous nation proud of its 5,000 years history dating back to starting the age of Tangun. Following the surrender of Japan, the US allied with the USSR and Britain to achieve their aim of dividing Korea. The initial intention was to occupy south Korea and then dominate the whole peninsula. But as they failed to realize their aim and their armed aggression ended in fiasco in 1953, they occupied south Korea as the trampoline for implementing their policy of provoking a nuclear war.

They found such a trampoline in south Korea, not in Europe which refuses to allow them to violate other nations at will, nor in the Middle East, which they intend to keep intact as an inexhaustible oil well.

Because this enables the US to strike north Korea and other socialist countries accurately from a close distance when a nuclear war breaks out, while the US mainland might be safe from the danger of attack from without.

In the past the US provoked wars more than 140 times, including the invasion of Playa Giron; all of them were fought outside of US territory; not a single bomb was dropped on US territory. It was the sinister ambition of the US to sacrifice the whole of Korea to serve its own interests. But they found it difficult to occupy the whole peninsula, so they settled for grabbing south Korea instead.

At a meeting on Guam Island in 1969, the then US President Richard Nixon proclaimed his policy of "maintaining the status quo of division", in other words, the "two Koreas" policy. This policy also reflects the vile intention of south Korea to achieve "reunification" if it ever succeeds in becoming stronger than the north. Do

they think north Korea will sit daydreaming, resting on its laurels? They are mistaken: south Korea will never be able to overpower north Korea. Then is this division eternal?

Up to this moment the Korean people have been forced to endure the partition, but should the US aggression be left unchecked, their sufferings will never end.

It is a tragedy that a single nation, proud of its oneness in blood, language and cultural tradition since the period of Tangun, has been torn apart as if it were two different states with the Military Demarcation Line as the border line.

It is intolerable that the country remains split. But it is beyond endurance that the whole nation should be sacrificed to US interests.

This makes me think of the unlawful occupation of the Guantanamo naval base in Cuba, and the provocations for finding a pretext to invade Cuba.

The US can by no means create "two Koreas", I think.

The times have changed. This is no longer the time when Ito Hirobumi, the cursed enemy of the Korean people, dominated Korea with a palabra.

The whole Korean people is armed and ready to defend Korea's sovereignty, I think that the Yankee imperialists will end up digging their own graves.

The American imperialists were defeated by the People's Army, and the same can be said about the incident of the spy ship *Pueblo* and the Phanmunjom incident.

Even with the threat of over 1,000 nuclear weapons deployed in south Korea, as the Cuban people were threatened in the crisis of October 1962, the Korean people will never be brought to their knees.

The revolutionaries only kneel down before the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the motherland.

After concluding his explanation, the KPA officer led me to a dwelling five minutes' drive from there. This is where the Armistice Agreement was signed. In the middle of the room there was a table, lying on which was the document of the agreement US General Clark signed recognizing their defeat before the Korean people.

In a room of the Military Armistice Commission was a large table with a line running across it. This is the Military Demarcation Line, said the officer.

The MDL runs under the same roof and across one building.

Not satisfied with the 240 kilometre-long MDL in the four kilometre wide Demilitarized Zone, they even divided the building in two!

The Korean people are heartbroken by the partition of the country.

Reunification brooks no delay. How to achieve reunification is clearly indicated in the ten-point programme for reunifying the whole country presented by President Kim Il Sung, which voices the people's desire to end the division and heal the sufferings of the nation.

The situation is perilous: whether to be united after reunifying the country or to start a fratricidal war.

President Kim Il Sung illumined a unique way of saving Korea's 70 million people from national disaster and hewing out their own destiny independently and emphasized the urgent necessity of great national unity for the independent and peaceful reunification of the motherland.

Only unity can frustrate the machinations of those who are opposed to the nation and seek to maintain the

division, only unity can pull down the barriers of partition. Only this makes it possible to defend the interests and security of the Korean nation and facilitate the unified development of the country. If the US unleashes a nuclear war, it will have to confront a united people who are ready to lay down their lives if necessary.

Without the nation, the ideology and regime, the political view and ideal are of no value.

Korea's 70 million people must cease arguing; their common enemy will make profit between the two contestants while the Korean nation will suffer a loss, the programme pointed out.

The grand ten-point programme which I read is the banner of unity and a beacon for the Korean people to reunify the country in the 90s and, on the basis of love for the nation and the spirit of national independence, to weather out the prevailing difficulties.

Therefore the world's people are hailing the programme as the "great programme for establishing an independent, peaceful and neutral state by unifying the whole nation based on love for the nation and the spirit of national independence", "a crystallization of the profound ideology and lofty spirit of President Kim Il Sung", "just programme mirroring the will and aspiration of the Korean people", the "programme showing the art of leadership and sagacity of the President", and so forth.

Terminating the inspection of Phanmunjom, I headed for Kaesong city, the capital of Koryo, the first unified Korean state which existed from 918 to 1392.

This city, Kaegyong at the time, preserves relics showing Korea's ancient history. The majority of the relics preserved were destroyed by the US bombings

during the 1950-53 war. However they were restored according to historic principles and modern aesthetics thanks to the concern of President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il.

After a brief rest at the Janamsan Hotel, I rode for some 40 minutes by car to look at the concrete walls.

The concrete walls built all along the distance of 240 kilometres bisecting the country in half!

I don't think it necessary to refer to the walls in detail. The media have dealt with the topic often enough.

What I wish to emphasize here is that the concrete walls are a testimony of history to show who wants and who opposes reunification and clearly reveal the anti-national attitude of the south Korean authorities who feign concern over reunification and grief at the national division and the separation of families.

Looking at the walls through prism glass, I said:

"The division of the country must be painful to you.

"Cuba and the DPRK, though small countries, can defeat imperialism if they unite their strengths.

"Because they receive the correct leadership of Fidel, the highest leader of the Cuban revolution, and President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, Cuba and the DPRK will win as ever in the future. I will do everything I can to further strengthen solidarity with the Korean people in their struggle for national reunification."

Moved by my sentiments, the interpreter and the guide seized my hand and pressed it tightly to their hearts.

Suddenly one thing greatly struck me.

Even if the dark clouds of imperialism envelop the globe, the river continues to flow under the thick ice,

and waves surge even under the icebergs in the Arctic Ocean. No force can block the current of independence and great unity toward reunification.

11. High Appreciation Granted by Noble Heart

I little expected that I would have the honour of meeting President Kim Il Sung again: but from the moment I was told by the Korean ambassador to Cuba, the thought of my interview with the President did not leave me.

I prepared a present to offer to the President but when it was conveyed to him through a functionary I felt disappointed and thought there was no hope of meeting him.

However, my disappointment did not last long.

On November 4, 1993 I was informed that the next day the President would receive me.

At first I could not believe my ears; my heart started to beat violently, but it was really happening; the functionary reaffirmed this. What a great honor! I could neither sleep nor calm myself down.

I remembered my first interview with the President on May 27, 1951. Though very busy conducting the troops in the war, he received us–the officials of the Women's Commission–in his office and congratulated us on the success in our work.

Beaming brightly, he greeted us, clasping our hands one after another.

The functionary who introduced us told him which countries we had come from. It was my turn when the functionary told him I had come from Cuba. He looked into my face attentively and said, turning to the functionaries:

"Comrades, do you know how far does Cuba lie from Korea?..." Glancing around the group of women of the Commission, he continued:

"You have been in our country with the noble aim of investigating on the spot the atrocities the American aggressors are committing in Korea in a vicious attempt to make our country their colony, and of determining the real nature of the Korean war. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to you for this....

"Korea is bound to be a free, independent state.

"Korea cannot and will never be a colony of the American imperialists."

Listening to his words, I made my decision to convey what I had seen and heard in Korea and the heroic struggle of the Korean people to the Cuban and other people of Latin America.

Back home, I informed our people of the crimes and atrocities the US troops, chieftain of the UN forces, had committed against the peaceful inhabitants of Korea. And I called upon them to oppose and fight against the planned dispatch of Cubans to the war against the fraternal Korean people who are defending the independence of their country and motherland.

Soon the Federation of Democratic Women of Cuba published the book *What I Saw in Korea* which I had written in haste.

The Cuban people were opposed to the war in Korea. The Cuban people, who express solidarity with

all peace-loving peoples and defend liberty and independence, said: "No mercenaries to the war!"

What I did is nothing extraordinary; I only fulfilled my mission to do everything necessary in order to prevent the beautiful country of Korea and my people from being drenched in blood.

Rather I should thank General Kim Il Sung–the master of revolution–who taught me the great and immortal lessons of heroism, dignity, firmness, patriotism, and confidence in the victory of the just cause and the revolutionary world outlook.

Day broke through the panorama of my reminiscences: not knowing how to behave in his presence made me restless, and I had no idea about etiquette. I was preoccupied with this.

However, the moment I saw him, all my fears vanished. Kindly offering his hand, he asked about my health and if I felt well in his country. "We grew old alike..." he said. "Yes, we did," I answered. Smiling broadly, he hugged me warmly. My eyes were wet with tears and my pulse stirred violently, not because I was old, but because his glance, words, smiles and hands were overflowing with warm love.

We talked about various problems. He asked questions and I responded. I felt as if I had met an old, dear friend.

Also present in the room were Korean comrades and Juan Jose Leon, the Cuban ambassador to the DPRK, but he conversed with me alone, as if none but he and I were there.

He favoured me with anecdotes from his life and inquired about Comrade Carlos Rafael, our common friend who had been to Korea in 1986.

During the conversation he offered me a cigarette. I was embarrassed, but owing to his repeated offer I accepted.

I will not forget the fact that he called me "comrade-in-arms" four times.

After expressing his opinions concerning various themes, he invited me to pose for a souvenir photograph. I held his arm tight. I did not want to let go of it. He arranged a luncheon, offered me delicious Korean dishes and toasted the health of me and my people.

Having the honour of being his comrade-in-arms I will become a faithful daughter of this people, I said to myself full of admiration for him.

Before my emotions during the interview with him had time to subside, he called me again to his side as my visit was drawing to a close.

"Is it possible to see such an honor repeated in the twilight of my life?" They say, bliss does not come single. Wasn't this a dream?

When I arrived at his residence, he was waiting for me with three anti-Japanese guerrilla veterans; two of them were my acquaintances, Pak Jong Suk and Kim Hye Sun, while the third woman was Choe Song Suk. The President introduced her to me as the Chairwoman of the Central Committee of the Union of Agricultural Working People of Korea. At the age of 18, she had joined the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla Army, he said.

Our reunion had a very intimate and family atmosphere.

It was neither a formal nor a farewell talk. He invited us four as we occupy a special place in his mind, he said. We are all veteran fighters and sisters in the

same cause. This expression stirred my emotions immeasurably.

I felt like crying, embraced as I was by his broad radiant smile.

"Be calm, my heart!"

At this moment, my intense emotion was on the point of exploding. Yet, one more measure of his affection was in store for me. He held my hand to put a valuable watch inscribed with his name on my wrist. From that moment the tempo of my life has been in time with the tick of that watch.

The President, calming me down with his affection, said that Korea was grateful to Cuba for her solidarity; I made a contribution to efforts at preventing the dispatch of Cuban troops by denouncing the imperialists' aggression against his motherland; Commander Fidel divulged the aggressive intention against the DPRK before the people of the United States in connection with the violation of Korean territorial waters by the spy ship *Pueblo;* Cuba did a great service not only to Korea but also to the people of the world by airing over Radio Havana-Cuba the statement of the captain of the *Pueblo* admitting their act of violation. The solidarity of Cuba was at every difficult moment on the side of Korea, the truth and justice.

Honor should be granted to a person who deserves it.

"To honor is an honor," said Jose Marti.

While I was still overwhelmed with emotion, the President invited me to the New Year's art performance which he enjoys with the children, the future of the nation.

Bliss is followed by luck, and vice versa; he stood

me on the zenith of happiness and human love.

Let me hail before history, world and humankind: he is a great man....

12. The Tree Dies Standing

I seem to be the old almond tree which spreads its branches of handsome foliage over my house and, rarely if ever, flowers. During my visit to the DPRK, my life reflowered and I became younger thanks to President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il.

My colleagues consider me a retired lawyer whose life energy has seeped away and who is nothing but a stone in the ruins of a castle.

The unexpected invitation extended to me at such a time moved me greatly.

President Kim Il Sung did not forget me and has summoned me to his side!

The interview with him on two occasions caused a grand commotion among the functionaries of the Cuban embassy in the DPRK as an irrefutable demonstration of love and trust towards the Cuban people.

On November 5, the President received me, and I said to him:

"Previously I wrote a pamphlet denouncing the crimes committed by the Yankee imperialists against the Korean people. During the current visit I intend to write a book about the victory of socialism in Korea and the great achievements made in the fields of the economy, culture, education and public health."

He was so kind as to provide every necessary condition for me and exhorted me to take care of my health and break the fatigue of a long journey.

So I spent a few days at the balneal home in Sinchon taking hot baths and feasting my eyes upon the autumnal splendour of the scenery. I was under the illusion that I was in paradise.

Later I received the souvenir photographs of myself in his company.

The bygone days from the time we posed for a photograph with him at the Supreme Headquarters during the Fatherland Liberation War recurred to my mind.

(I will keep this photograph as a treasure in my house and will never forget the high honor of "comrade-in-arms" conferred upon me by the President.)

At this time I had another grand surprise in my life. The Companero Chairman of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries handed me gifts sent by Kim Jong Il; an overcoat, shoes and other things indispensable for me in passing the cold Korean winter.

I did not know how to thank him for this.

I was touched by his gentle and human attention.

As I live in a tropical country, I could not imagine the Korean winter, nor that I would stay so long. So, I had not brought any clothes for the winter. But being concerned with my situation, he sent me these valuable, precious gifts.

I do not tremble before the imperialists, but winter is unbearable for me. I am infinitely grateful for the gifts he sent me, not forgetting the fact that I live in a tropical country.

The companeroes around me dispersed, but I did not

move away from the gifts, nor switch on the bedroom lamp in the dormitory.

I recalled with emotion a succession of events which took place at the Mansudae Assembly Hall yesterday. On November 11, after inspecting the maternity hospital, I drove to the assembly hall, a modern building reflecting traditional beauty, and a majestic place that solemnizes people's sentiments.

High-ranking functionaries of the Central People's Committee and representatives of the Cuban embassy in the DPRK were on hand.

The ceremony was held in a simple yet grand and solemn manner. After reading the decree, the Vice-President of the Republic, on behalf of the President and Kim Jong Il, awarded the Order of Friendship First Class to me.

This was beyond my imagination. I am awarded this order...? This order is awarded to foreigners for distinguished exploits of international friendship and solidarity.

"This order was awarded to me...?"

I was overwhelmed by emotion, the Vice-President hung the order round my neck. What a great honor!

Looking up at the portrait of President Kim Il Sung, I said: "I express profound gratitude to President Kim Il Sung and Comrade Kim Jong Il. President, you invited me to your side, called me your comrade-in-arms and today awarded me the order. I will consider this order conferred not only upon me but also upon the Cuban people for opposing the dispatch of troops to fight against the fraternal Korean people who are suffering from the war of aggression imposed by the Yankee imperialists."

All applauded.

"Commander Fidel Castro and President Kim Il Sung," I continued, "are the great leaders who are defending the banner of socialism in the world. I believe that the cause of socialism will be victorious. I will make every effort to assist in Korea's reunification and to ensure that socialism triumphs.

"Please convey my gratitude to President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il."

Overwhelmed with emotion, Companero Miguel Puentes, the political counselor of the Cuban embassy, said:

"On behalf of the entire staff of the Cuban embassy I offer my sincere gratitude to the great leader President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il.

"This is a great honor for the Cuban people.

"We and Companero Candelaria Rodriguez and all Cuban people are firmly convinced that the relations of amity between our two countries will further strengthen and evolve on the basis of the fraternal ties established between Commander Fidel Castro and President Kim Il Sung."

Back in my residence, I admired the order and its carnet over and over again.

This surpasses the love of my parents, brothers and sisters.

My parents have long since departed from this world while my brothers, who took part in the Cuban revolution, all died of illness. My three sisters left to live in other countries.

I live a happy life amidst the affection of our Commander Fidel Castro and today in the DPRK President Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il revitalized me.

"I will dedicate," I resolved in my mind, "the remainder

of my life to the DPRK, my second Motherland, and to further strengthening and developing the amity between our two countries."

I am not so much an old tree, as a grand tree; I will be loyal to Fidel and President Kim Il Sung, who called me "comrade-in-arms" and qualified me as one standing in the ranks of the combatants, and Kim Jong Il.

I have written this book and will continue to write more in the future.

The tree dies standing. I will live firmly to the last moment of my life, like Companero Ri In Mo who lived and lives unyieldingly in the face of adversity and vicissitudes.

Like the almond tree spreading its branches over my house I will extend the verdant branches of revolution, and wield the brush of justice. And I will see to it that my almond tree grows over the heads of the peoples of the Spanish-speaking countries and progressive peoples the world over.

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"You might as well try to break a rock with an egg as attempt to destroy Korea....

"Imperialists should know that the world may disappear but the unity between the leader and the Korean people will never be broken."

PYONGYANG, KOREA
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